AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.-17. (Canceled).

18. (Currently Amended) A method for suppressing the formation of precipitates during or after the heat sterilization of a beverage in the process of producing a milk-added coffee beverage, comprising adding sodium hydroxide or sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide as a strongly basic substance and from 0 to less than 0.14 wt% of sodium bicarbonate to a coffee component, mixing a milk component therewith and then heat sterilizing the mixture, provided that phosphate salts are excluded from the strongly basic substance.

19. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein the strongly basic substance is added before mixing the milk component with the coffee component and subsequently the coffee component is admixed with the milk component before the beverage is subjected to heat sterilization.

20. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein addition of the strongly basic substance reduces the amount of emulsifier and/or thickening agent required.

21. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 20, wherein the total amount of emulsifier and thickening agent added is no greater than 1 wt%.

22. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein the pH of the milk-added coffee beverage product is 5.8-7.0.

23. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 18, wherein the strongly basic substance is ~~at least one member selected from the group consisting of~~ sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide.

24. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim ~~23~~18, wherein the amount of the strongly basic substance added is 0.005-0.5 wt%.

25.-26. (Canceled).

27. (Canceled).

28. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein the milk-added coffee beverage contains the coffee component at 1.08-10 wt%.

29. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein the milk-added coffee beverage contains the milk component at 1.48-10 wt%.

30. (Currently Amended)~~)~~ A milk-added coffee beverage containing at least one strongly basic substance selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide and a combination of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide, in addition to from 0 to less than 0.14 wt% of sodium bicarbonate.

31.-32. (Canceled).

33. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 30, wherein the amount of the strongly basic substance in the beverage is 0.005-0.5 wt%.

34. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 30, which contains a coffee component at 1.08-10 wt%.

35. (Previously Presented)) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 30, which contains a milk component at 1.48-10 wt%.

36. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 35, wherein the milk component is cow's milk.

37. (Canceled).

38. (Previously Presented) A method for suppressing the formation of precipitates during or after the heat sterilization of a beverage in the process of producing a milk-added coffee beverage, comprising adding a basic amino acid to a coffee component, mixing a milk component therewith and then heat sterilizing the mixture.

39. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 38, wherein the basic amino acid is added before mixing the milk component with the coffee component and subsequently the coffee component is admixed with the milk component before the beverage is subjected to heat sterilization.

40. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 38, wherein addition of the basic amino acid reduces the amount of emulsifier and/or thickening agent required.

41. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 40, wherein the total amount of emulsifier and thickening agent added is no greater than 1 wt%.

42. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 38, wherein the pH of the milk-added coffee beverage product is 5.8-7.0.

43. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 38, wherein the basic amino acid is at least one selected from the group consisting of lysine, arginine and histidine.

44. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 38, wherein the amount of the basic amino acid added is 0.01-1 wt%.

45. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 38, wherein sodium bicarbonate is added in an amount of no more than 0.14 wt% in addition to the basic amino acid.

46. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 38, wherein the milk-added coffee beverage contains the coffee component at 0.1-10 wt%.

47. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 38, wherein the milk-added coffee beverage contains the milk component at 0.1-10 wt%.

48. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage wherein said beverage contains a basic amino acid but does not contain sodium bicarbonate at an amount of more than 0.14 wt%, and wherein the beverage is to be heat-sterilized and placed on the market in a hermetically sealed container.

49. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, wherein the basic amino acid is at least one selected from the group consisting of lysine, arginine and histidine.

50. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, wherein the amount of the basic amino acid in the beverage is 0.005-0.5 wt%.

51. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, which contains a coffee component at 0.1-10 wt%.

52. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, which contains a milk component at 0.1-10 wt%.

53. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 52, wherein the milk component is cow's milk.

54. (Canceled).